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Chair: Mr. Tafrov ..... (Bulgaria)

Contents

Agenda item 64: Report of the Human Rights Council (*continued*)

Agenda item 27: Social development (*continued*)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*)

Agenda item 69: Promotion and protection of human rights (*continued*)

(b) Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 64: Report of the Human Rights Council (*continued*)

Draft resolution A/C.3/68/L.75: Report of the Human Rights Council

1. **Ms. Mballa Eyenga** (Cameroon), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the Group attached great importance to General Assembly resolution 60/251, which established the Human Rights Council and determined that the Council was a subsidiary body of and should therefore submit recommendations and an annual report to the General Assembly. The principles of constructive dialogue and cooperation and the need to ensure universality, objectivity and non-selectivity while eliminating double standards and politicization in the consideration of human rights, enshrined in resolution 60/251, had informed the text of the draft resolution.

2. Before the designation of the senior focal point for the prevention of reprisals against and the intimidation of those cooperating with the United Nations, mentioned in Human Rights Council resolution 24/24, a feasibility study should be conducted and the experience of existing mechanisms to address such matters within United Nations bodies should be taken into account. The Group questioned whether the 47 members of the Council had a mandate to designate a focal point whose recommendations would be binding on other United Nations entities. Resolution 24/24 could seriously affect the agenda, mandates and mechanisms of the Council's institution-building package.

3. The Group opposed reprisals against and the intimidation of those cooperating with the Council's special procedures and had held many bilateral consultations on the need to allow time for further discussion of resolution 24/24. In particular, consultation with the universal membership of the United Nations would build the required consensus. Accordingly, the draft resolution contained a decision to defer action on resolution 24/24 until further consultation had taken place and to conclude its consideration of that resolution before the end of its sixty-eighth session.

4. **Mr. Gustafik** (Secretary of the Committee) said that the Russian Federation had become a sponsor.

Agenda item 27: Social development (*continued*)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*)

Draft resolution A/C.3/68/L.10/Rev.1: Policies and programmes involving youth

5. **The Chair** said that the draft resolution contained no programme budget implications.

6. **Mr. Moura** (Portugal) said that Burundi, Chile, the Czech Republic, Guatemala, Hungary, Luxembourg, Monaco, Montenegro, Mozambique, the Philippines, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Serbia, the Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the United Republic of Tanzania, Ukraine and Uruguay had become sponsors, while the Sudan was no longer a sponsor.

7. Young people comprised a quarter of the world's population. Since youth issues were cross-cutting and affected all Member States, the draft resolution was designed to apply to young people worldwide. It focused on their integration into society as an engine of development, recognizing that they could bring about social change. Their participation in decision-making processes, including the design and implementation of policies, programmes, initiatives and the post-2015 development agenda, would empower them.

8. The challenges faced by young people in finding decent work compromised their autonomy during their transition to adult life. Although employment was essential to their social integration, it was not a stand-alone issue but was linked to education, health, access to information and communications technology and other priority areas mentioned in the World Programme of Action for Youth. Since those priority areas were interrelated and mutually reinforcing, a comprehensive approach to them was needed in order to promote youth development.

9. Member States should combat social problems such as poverty, hunger, malnutrition, substance abuse and violence, which affected young people's cognitive, social and economic capabilities and hindered their engagement in development. Gender equality, non-discrimination, the fight against HIV/AIDS and access to health and information affected youth development in the long term. Youth representatives contributed positively to the General Assembly and

added value to its debates. He hoped that the text of the draft resolution, which was balanced and represented a collective effort, would be adopted by consensus.

10. **Mr. Gustafik** (Secretary of the Committee) said that Andorra, Argentina, Belize, Bulgaria, Colombia, Gabon, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Niger, Panama, Paraguay, Saudi Arabia, Suriname, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago and the United Arab Emirates had become sponsors.

11. **Mr. Dapkiunas** (Belarus), speaking in explanation of position, said that the Committee's goals in drafting documents could become harmful when they were used to deflect attention from issues which should be addressed as a matter of priority. His delegation had intended to propose an amendment to the draft resolution, asserting young people's responsibility for the future of humankind, the pivotal role of the family in society and the need to foster the family pattern and respect for family values. The coordinators of the draft resolution had attempted to avoid discussion of the initiative on the pretext that it was controversial; however, his delegation believed that the text should contain a statement of simple truths which ran across cultures.

12. Although Governments could question and manipulate the fundamental social institution of the family within their own jurisdictions, they could not rewrite the internationally agreed definition enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights or change the fact that the majority of the world's population regarded experimentation in the field of sexual liberation as deeply wrong. While the international community should prevent negative discrimination against human beings on the basis of their otherness, it should be more cautious in deciding on the subjects of positive discrimination — on which values to foster and promote. The two global schools of thought on the role of family values were in fundamental disagreement. To bridge the divide, the General Assembly should focus not only on the need for unity and the role of religious, cultural and ethnic differences in stemming conflict but also on the constructive potential of uniqueness and diversity.

13. The Committee's agenda made it a suitable forum for discussion of the ways in which diversity and difference could be peacefully managed. His delegation had aimed through its initiative not to politicize the Committee's work but to start such a discussion. The United Nations should not be merely a vehicle for the assertion of safe trivialities but, as had originally been intended, the global public square in which the peoples of the world could negotiate ways of living together with their different beliefs.

14. His delegation had decided not to propose its amendment, in order to avoid putting those delegations which could not speak their mind freely, owing to the niceties of international lobbying, in an awkward position, and because the approval of the amendment was less important than his delegation's strong desire to act correctly. The vote on the amendment would have tested the courage of many delegations, but would not have been the final word on the matter. That initiative constituted the first step on a long journey. That step would have been much braver if the Committee had discussed the initiative; in the future, the Committee would need to dare to make such crucial decisions.

15. *Draft resolution A/C.3/68/L.10/Rev.1 was adopted.*

16. **Mr. Escalante Hasbún** (El Salvador), speaking on behalf of the delegations of Argentina, Austria, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom and Uruguay, said that although half of the global population was under 25 years old, the sexual and reproductive health of young people was worse than that of any other social group. The rights of young women and girls in particular were undermined through gender-based discrimination and violence, with serious consequences for their aspirations, health, education, employment and economic prospects.

17. Young people were increasingly emphasizing sexual and reproductive rights in the recommendations they made to Governments through groups such as the Global Youth Forum and the World Youth Alliance, since those rights were essential to the prevention of maternal mortality, HIV, early pregnancy and violence against girls. Millions of adolescent girls, many under the age of 15, gave birth every year, and 50,000 died because of complications during pregnancy and childbirth. More and more young women were developing obstetric fistula because of early childbirth. Child brides, of whom there were 60 million, were at

greater risk of early pregnancy, which had implications for newborn babies: stillbirths and death in the first week of life were 50 per cent higher among babies born to mothers under the age of 20 than among babies born to older mothers.

18. Five million young people were living with HIV, and infection rates were twice as high for young women as for young men, but only a third of young men and a quarter of young women knew how to prevent the spread of the virus. Lack of information and services for adolescents hindered their ability to protect themselves and efforts to reduce the infection rate.

19. Many young women and girls were subject to harmful practices including domestic abuse, sexual harassment, sexual violence, exploitation and trafficking, and female genital mutilation. Half of sexual assaults were committed against girls under the age of 16, and the first sexual experience of a third of women and girls was forced.

20. The sexual and reproductive rights of young people, in particular young women, should be upheld through educational, legal and policy measures. Sexual and reproductive health should be included in General Assembly resolutions because adolescents, in particular women and girls, lacked information and access to health care and services, which violated their human rights and challenged development efforts. Adolescents' ability to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights was essential to gender equality, educational attainment, economic development, poverty reduction and political participation.

21. **Ms. Robl** (United States of America) said that her delegation understood the references in the draft resolution to the rights and responsibilities of young people to include reproductive rights, which rested on the recognition that couples and individuals had the right to decide on the number and spacing of their children. Sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights were essential in empowering young people to make responsible decisions, complete their education and contribute to economic development. Many young people, however, faced reproductive health challenges. Millions of girls, including 2 million aged between 10 and 14, gave birth every year, mostly in the developing world. It was thus essential for youth and adolescents to have access to sexual and reproductive health services and for their reproductive rights to be respected. Those rights, which had been defined in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994, were the foundation of global efforts to enable young people to realize their potential. The promotion of the right of individuals to decide on matters related to their sexuality without coercion, discrimination or violence was essential to the empowerment of youth.

22. Her delegation was concerned by the inclusion of the term "incitement" in the draft resolution, because that term was often used to repress minorities and suppress political opposition, and many countries had interpreted it to mean any offensive or anti-government speech.

23. **Reverend Wylie** (Observer for the Holy See) said that any resolution on youth policies and programmes required strong protection for the families of young people, because it was the family rather than the State which produced and raised the next generation. In her report to the General Assembly (A/68/275), the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography had described the family as the first layer of a protective environment and as essential to the protection of young people, and had pointed out the main elements which weakened families' ability to provide such an environment and made youth more likely to engage in risky behaviour. His delegation therefore regretted the absence of a paragraph concerning the family in the text of the draft resolution.

24. The misinterpretation by some delegations of the expression "sexual and reproductive health", which appeared in the draft resolution, as including recourse to abortion was a threat to human life and of no help to young people. The Holy See's reservations about the expression were contained in the report of the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994 (A/RES/49/128), and the report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995 (A/CONF.177/20/Rev.1). The report of the International Conference on Population and Development explicitly stated that no new rights were established through the expression and that abortion could never be a means of family planning. It clarified that the issue should be determined in accordance with national legislation.

25. Parents were essential to the education of young people and were responsible for ensuring their survival and development. In accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, parents had a right prior to that of the State or other actors to determine their child's education, including in relation to morality,

religion, sexuality, marriage and the family. The rights and responsibilities of parents stemmed from their right to freedom of religion and their right to ensure their child's religious and moral education in conformity with their own convictions.

26. His delegation understood the term "gender" to mean "male and female" only, in line with general usage.

27. **Ms. Almeida Watanabe Patriota** (Brazil) said that her Government had given youth policies a high priority by fostering an intergenerational debate and promoting the autonomy and emancipation of young people. Her delegation had supported the consensus on the draft resolution but believed that it would have benefited from a fuller understanding of young people. Although the creation of decent work was important, young people should not simply be shaped to fit the labour market; rather, their diversity should be celebrated. Her Government was committed to equal opportunities and the elimination of discrimination against young people on the basis of race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, language, religion, political views, disabilities and national or social origin. Those ideas should have been more clearly reflected in the text, particularly with regard to sexual and reproductive rights.

28. Her delegation welcomed the recognition in paragraph 7 of the importance of youth participation, but regretted the slow progress of the establishment of a permanent mechanism which would ensure the presence of youth delegates in United Nations bodies. Such a mechanism would foster intergenerational collaboration by bringing together Member States, the United Nations system, youth-led movements and youth representatives. The text should have referred more emphatically to the challenge of updating United Nations youth policies and programmes through social dialogue and youth participation.

29. Because some of her delegation's concerns had not been reflected in the text, it had decided not to sponsor the draft resolution. Her Government nonetheless reaffirmed its commitment to contributing to United Nations and government youth policies and programmes.

30. **Ms. Ali** (Bahrain), speaking on behalf of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, said that Arab States of the Gulf were taking steps to satisfy the aspirations of youth through the adoption of national legislation, joint work in all areas and at all levels, and cooperation with international partners to enhance the participation of youth in their societies.

31. **Mr. Mandoukou Ombegue** (Gabon), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that in light of the myriad of education, employment, health and other challenges facing African youth, who accounted for a significant proportion of Africa's population, and the immense challenge facing Governments and policymakers in providing opportunities for the millions of young people, there was a need to invest in them and equip them to drive Africa's peace and development agenda. The Decade for Youth Development and Empowerment proclaimed by the African Union in 2009 was therefore an opportunity to advance youth development across Africa and enhance investment in relevant development programmes.

32. The family was the core unit of society that played an essential role in the socioeconomic development process, in instilling culture and ethical, social and spiritual values and in education. It was of utmost importance for policymakers to respect and promote that fundamental role of the family and for social institutions to respect and support the efforts of parents and caregivers. The lack of guidance and support often hindered young people's potential to emerge as leaders and had indirect and direct repercussions on their physical, social and economic well-being.

33. The resolution adopted earlier could have been more action-oriented, focusing on the priority areas of the World Programme of Action for Youth, in particular, education, employment, hunger and poverty, in line with the resolution and conclusions of the 101st session of the International Labour Conference. Nonetheless, the Group fully supported the resolution and reiterated its commitment to implementing the 15 priority areas of the aforementioned programme of action. It also called on the United Nations and the wider international community to continue striving for a more coherent, comprehensive and integrated approach to youth development and to support national and regional efforts in that regard.

34. **Ms. Smaila** (Nigeria) said that the Secretary-General's demonstrated commitment to working with young people was a clear indication of the importance of their voice in United Nations discussions and his Five-Year Action Agenda was a laudable achievement in that regard. Given the Organization's focus on education, science and technology, it was important to

consider how investments in those areas could affect youth development prospects and their capacity to engage constructively in and contribute to their societies. Engaging young people in decision-making and development helped to build capacity and create sustained partnerships towards the achievement of the post-2015 agenda. The importance of that dynamic could not be overemphasized.

35. The nexus between development and security lay in the right of young people to participate in policymaking processes and their right to employment. Decent and productive work for the millions of workers coming of age in the next decade would enable them to lift themselves out of poverty; without the involvement of young people, the full achievement of Millennium Development Goals would remain elusive and their long-term sustainability would be compromised. The resolution showed the critical role played by Member States in ensuring the inclusion of young people in all facets of the development agenda.

36. **Mr. Dehghani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his country attached great importance to family values. The resolution should have included discussions on the family and could have been enriched with a paragraph on promoting family and respect of family values among youth. His delegation was among the many that had engaged actively in the negotiations, with a constructive and flexible spirit, to reach a consensus.

37. **Ms. Al-Mulla** (Qatar) said that her delegation shared the views on the importance of including language on the family, which played a role of paramount importance in the development and guidance of young people. It was regretful that such a capital element had not been included in the resolution.

Agenda item 69: Promotion and protection of human rights (*continued*)

(b) Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms (*continued*) (A/C.3/68/L.37 and A/C.3/68/L.44)

Draft resolution A/C.3/68/L.37: Enhancement of international cooperation in the field of human rights

38. **The Chair** said that he had been advised that the draft resolution contained no programme budget implications.

39. **Ms. Astiasarán Arias** (Cuba), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, asked the Secretariat once again to correct the Spanish version of the text, which stated erroneously that Cuba was acting on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The objective of the draft resolution was to recognize that enhanced international cooperation was essential for achieving the goals of the United Nations. She said that in paragraph 13, the words "to continue" should be deleted.

40. **Mr. Gustafik** (Secretary of the Committee) said that Brazil, China, El Salvador and the Russian Federation had joined the sponsors.

41. *Draft resolution A/C.3/68/L.37, as orally amended, was adopted.*

42. **Ms. Robl** (United States of America) said that her country was pleased to join consensus on the draft resolution, as it recognized the importance of increased cooperation and dialogue. However, while the United States concurred that there were regional crises, and that some parts of the world were confronting food and commodity price volatility, it was inaccurate to speak of a continuing global food crisis. That view had been reinforced by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations and other bodies. Nonetheless, the United States had every intention to continue its efforts to enhance international cooperation aimed at improving global food security.

Draft resolution A/C.3/68/L.44: International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance

43. **The Chair** said that he had been advised that the draft resolution contained no programme budget implications.

44. **Ms. Perceval** (Argentina) said that the draft resolution urged countries that had not yet ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance to consider signing and ratifying or acceding to it as a matter of priority. The Convention was the first legally binding instrument on the matter to recognize that systematic or generalized enforced disappearance could be considered a crime against humanity. It reaffirmed the rights of victims to truth, justice and reparation and filled a void in international law in preventing human rights violations and establishing States' obligations to investigate and punish those responsible. The draft

resolution was anchored in the Convention and recalled that no individual should be subjected to enforced disappearance or incognito detention.

45. Enforced disappearance should not be seen as a thing of the past; it remained a painful reality. While it was not a widespread scourge, unaffected countries should act in solidarity to prevent its recurrence. Her delegation hoped that the resolution would be adopted by consensus, which, like the Convention, would honour the memory of the disappeared persons and protect future generations.

46. **Mr. Gustafik** (Secretary of the Committee) said that Belize, Benin, Canada, Comoros, Costa Rica, Cuba, Eritrea, Grenada, Guinea Bissau, India, Iraq, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, New Zealand, Palau, Panama, Peru, Samoa, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Swaziland, Togo, Ukraine, Uganda, and Vanuatu had joined the sponsors.

47. *Draft resolution A/C.3/68/L.44 was adopted.*

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.